

# COLFO News Issue 1 – February 2017

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## Help us to help you

COLFO have canvassed the submissions that were made public by the Law & Order Select Committee recently. On review of those submissions we were alarmed at some of the content we found.

Our concern relates to the recommendations that have been made by the Police Association and NZ Police that would have a direct impact on licensed firearms owners with no real impact on the criminal element. Both organisations submissions venture outside the scope and intent of the Law & Order Select Committee's subject matter.

Some of the recommendations include **full registration of firearms, reclassification of A cat Semi Autos to E Cat., increasing security requirements for all licensed holders**. Advice has been given to the Committee on significant changes without any operational justification as to how the changes will target criminals. There are also the submissions that the Select Committee have heard from Police which have not been made public.

The statistics that both organisations have quoted to back their recommendations are misleading and do not match each other. An example is of firearms seizures where the Police Association has a list of 52 "firearm seizures" over a six week period, but the NZ Police were able to identify only 26% of these from their list. It is of no surprise that firearms users are telling us there is a break down in the trust and integrity of their relationship with Police.

**If the Law & Order Select Committee were to follow these suggested recommendations then the environment for licensed firearms owners will change for us all**, regardless of the reason why you own a firearm. The environment for the criminal element will flourish with the possibility of more firearms going underground and into the black market.

As one of 242,000 firearms licensed citizens out there COLFO would like you to weigh up what the effect possible changes to legislation will have not only on you but on your peers and fellow legal, fit and proper owners. **Be warned that as a user, you will no doubt be financially responsible for the implementation of any proposed changes** (See Police cost recovery Act 2016).

COLFO needs your support now more than ever. We're not asking you to financially support us, we are asking you to get in behind us to protect your own interests as a firearms user. The international face of firearms is seeing changes with the European Union, Arms Trade Treaty and European Commission all having a stab at firearms legislation.

To maintain our current effective firearms control regime your views need to be made to our government and we will give you the information you'll need to make those views known in the near future.

## Where to with the Select Committee Inquiry

It is anticipated that the Select Committee will publish their report to parliament in March, it will then be up to the government to decide what action to take and whether new legislation is required. Once the details are known we will prepare comment on what the firearm community can do to protect their interests.

## Are firearm owners losing trust and confidence in the police hierarchy?

In the past twelve months firearm owners have been subject to a number of policy changes by police, all without prior consultation with community representatives. Is this heavy handed approach by police destroying our confidence that they will treat firearm owners in a fair and reasonable way? **Is the Firearms Community Advisory Forum just window dressing** to the recommendations of a past Law & Order Select Committee. COLFO is of the view that this forum is being used by police to communicate their views but not listen to those of the firearm community. We have also seen unsubstantiated claims in the media made by the Police Association regarding the number of imported and stolen firearms this engenders fear in the public and supports the Associations call for a fully armed police force..

Here are some of the policy changes that have occurred in the past year and what COLFO is doing about them:

**Certification of gun safes:** Police have recently advised COLFO that **POL 67N (November 2015)** that appears on the police website is a draft only. COLFO has provided comment to police that we hope will iron out some of the ambiguities and anomalies. Before you buy a new gun-safe we recommend that you check with your local Arms Officer to confirm that it complies with police requirements.

**Measurement of MSSAs with folding or telescopic butts:** Police have again changed their policy and now say "MSSA firearms will be measured in their "reduced state" (buttstock folded or collapsed) in order to determine their classification. Rifles and shotguns which collapse or fold, and which can still be fired in this reduced state will be assessed for classification in the reduced state. ANY firearm which is less than 762mm will be classified as a pistol. The length of any firearm is measured without any "attachments" (whether or not "permanently" attached (e.g. welding, pinned)), such as flash-hiders, silencers, muzzle brakes, barrel extensions or magazine extensions. In the case of rifled firearms (such as rifles and Pistols), barrel length will be determined by measuring the length of the barrel rifling." COLFO has asked police to reconsider the legality of this policy change and will push for financial compensation for any owners who find their MSSA is no longer able to be kept as an E Cat.. Court action may be required.

**Special reasons to import certain (.338 to .50) calibres of A Category firearms:** COLFO will apply to Police for the operational reason to justify this policy, pointing out that there are many lawful reasons why shooters may wish to use these calibres.

**Unacceptable delays to import permits:** COLFO believes that this reflects a failure on the part of police to carry out their statutory duty largely due to insufficient resources and will be conveying our concern to the Minister of Police.

**Police (Cost Recovery) Act 2016** allows Police to "recover its costs in respect of the provision of certain policing services". This Act could be used to charge more fees to firearms licence holders. Currently police claim that the revenue received from Firearm Licensing covers only about 50% of the actual cost of administering firearms. However these so called "actual costs" can easily be inflated by the way they are calculated so this 50% figure must be considered suspect especially in light of the inability or reluctance of Police to provide accurate information on costs. It may be that firearms licence holders are subsidising other police services. In addition COLFO is of the view that much of the work of Arms Officers is for operational reasons and therefore for the public good.

**Security Inspections:** These are usually carried out by vetting officers on behalf of the Arms Officer. COLFO has received a number of reports of inspecting officers demanding to photograph firearms or collect details of A Category firearms. There is no legal requirement for police to gather this information, if you do not wish to provide it you should politely refuse. If you have any issues with the inspecting officer we recommend that you consult with your local Arms Officer in the first instant.